

Environmental Advisory Committee

FY 2021 - 2022 Q1 Mtg. Notes

9/17/2021

Virtual Meeting

Bexar County

EAC Attendees:	EAC Absent:
Deepti Kharod	Joe Baker
Connie Waters	Stephan Lucke
Glynis Strause	David Reichart
Heather Hansen	Bree Jameson
James Dodson	Wilfred Korth
Annalisa Peace	
Janis Bush	San Antonio River Authority staff attendees:
Jason Katscmorak	Charles Lorea
	Steven Schauer
	Katye Brought
	Chris Vaugh
	Shaun Donovan
	Amy Zola
	Jeanette Gonzalez

1. Welcome

Deepti Kharod (DK) called the meeting order and started introduction, followed by committee members, guests, and San Antonio River Authority (River Authority) staff.

2. Approval of July 23, 2021 Minutes

DK calls for approval of minutes.

Janis Bush (JB) made motion to approve the minutes, **Heather Hansen (HH)** seconded motion; **DK** calls for vote, minutes approved by consensus.

Annalisa Peace (AP) in chat: I have an item for consideration; **DK** acknowledged

3. Clean River Program (CRP) Update – Chris Vaughn (CV)

No questions

4. Mussel Reintroduction Project – Chris Vaughn

HH in chat: What impacts to other species, plant & animal, are expected from introducing thousands of mussels to new areas? Or people trying to harvest mussels?

CV These mussels would have existed in large populations for hundreds of years in this reach of river so there wouldn't be any negative impacts to current residents of the river. If there are negative impacts to nonnative species that's a good thing.

Putting signage ahead of time is important for the Mussel Survivability Study. We won't be pointing people in the direction of where the juveniles are going. We'll be strategic in how we're planting them and the location of the signage.

DK What is the intended timeline for the floating baskets.

CV We're looking at putting the baskets in sooner than later but depends on production from hatchery that is growing the mussels. The idea is that when a m is 1 mm long they can stay in a lab setting but will take them longer to grow to 20 mm long where they're self-sufficient. The idea is to take the 1 mm mussels and put them in the river where they will grow faster in theory. The timeline for how long they stay in the baskets will be trial and error to see how quick they get to the self sustaining size.

CL A few comments regarding the impacts to adding fish to the area. In the Upper SAR those areas are impaired for fish communities and the addition of supplemental fish will serve to aid the mussels and increase the population. In this area there are many fish migrating and is beneficial overall. Mussels are filter feeders, we wish we could install a lot of them to move the bacteria around but realistically that is not a possibility.

HH in chat Where is the hatchery? Who runs it? Are they growing mussels specifically for SARA?

CV Inks Dam national Fish Hatchery in Burnet, TX run by US Fish & Wildlife Service. The River Authority has a contract with them to specifically grow the mussels.

5. Trash Outreach Creative Update – Katy Brought (KB)

HH in chat I've heard presentations by Litterati - they are an energetic data-driven group. Neat idea to partner with them

KB Thanks Heather. Literatti has a lot great initiatives and we thought it was a great partnership

AP Giveaway suggestion for a bag for people who smoke to use.

KB Thanked Annalisa for the suggestion.

DK Katy that was really interesting and some of us took part in some of the focus groups so to see these updates is very exciting. Janis and I had our students take part as well and I'm excited to give them the update. Being that the launch is next Friday can the students download the app now?

KB Definitely encourage them to download the app. Once we've finalized the River Authority campaign on the app they will be able to join. Thank you to all for their feedback and involvement, we appreciate it as we navigated through the campaign options.

Steven Schauer (SS) It will be important for citizens to use Litterati and join the campaign on the app. In future months we will have contests and prizes so using the campaign will significantly help us track and manage the data.

HH in chat Does the Litterati app track by GPS location?

SS One of the benefits of the Litterati app is not only capturing the types of trash people are tracking but the photo uploaded will also be tagged with the metadata of the location where people are picking up the trash. Future ideas are to do more studies and target messaging to the areas where the trash is coming from. If we're seeing particular types of trash from a specific company, we may go with them to help us educate their customers on proper disposal of their products, so it doesn't end up in our/their river. These are a few reasons why it is important to use the app and specifically the River Authority campaign.

JB Will there be simple resources for us to share with our networks?

SS Yes, our website will have resources on our website with links to the Litterati website and make it simple for our citizens to get engaged.

Glynis Straus (GS) Is there access to the river in Karnes County.

SS Presently, there is no public access to the river in Karnes County. In regard to the trash campaign in the southern basin, our messaging is to keep your own neighborhood clean. In the southern basin we will be pointing out illegal dumping as part of our messaging.

GS We do a trash truck program with our partners in Dewitt, Karnes, & Live Oak counties. I'll be glad to use our resources to help you around the river areas at these locations.

SS That would be great!

6. **The River Authority's Clean Goal Overview – Amy Zola (AZ)**

DK Appreciation of Amy's presentation

HH in chat The internal idea solicitation and tracking is wonderful to see, and a great idea for other groups/companies

AZ The Project Planning Office has presented this process to other external audiences and at conferences about the transparency and involvement of staff which has gotten some attention. The process has been popular and positive.

7. **Sustainability/Stormwater Communication Discussion – Steven Schauer**

AP Opportunity for potential partnerships through/with the Regional Flood Planning Groups and funding from foundations to influence the public and public policy. If you are interested let me know to bring in some of the partners.

SS Absolutely, I've made a note to follow up with you.

DK From the teaching angle, I try to implement sustainability as much as possible so that it's at the forefront of the next generations mind. This semester, I've introduced flash flooding to form the connection and use details along with the Floodplain Viewer to address the emotional connection and the direct relevance to their personal life.

SS This is another reason why we've launched the Trash Campaign. Steven discussed the importance and relevance of the change and education as it relates to stormwater issues.

JB Basura Bash is a huge event that gets people out to these areas and the end products is eye opening. Being in the riparian areas and the amount of trash that is found is the hook to link to the younger generations.

SS We're looking forward to the Basura Bash coming back this year after COVID. With our trash campaign, we're looking to organize competitions and volunteer activities to do exactly. This initiative will motivate people to be part of the solution.

JB Another thing that could be helpful would be to have the scientists to participate and talk about the science part of stormwater.

SS An important aspect of this will be to target our younger audience to support the messaging.

GS Does the River Authority have a curriculum for K-12 on these topics so they learn about trash, plastics early on to make them advocates and not bystanders?

SS spoke on the efforts of the Education and Engagement team throughout the school year and addition of Trash Campaign to the curriculum.

GS Do you do training with the teachers so they incorporate it in their environmental science classes?

SS Yes, we do. During the summer we host these courses for educators and offer travel stipend assistance to southern basin teachers.

GS Is the program only available to teachers in the San Antonio River Basin?

SS We wouldn't turn others away, but we do target the educators in our jurisdiction. If it's an interest to the committee, we can have Carrie Merson to give an update on their program.

DK I agree. A suggestion would be to package this for educators especially to elementary schools.

GS Spoke on the benefits of the tools and resources for educators.

AP At the Aquifer Alliance we've worked with the district entity that gives the certification and we provided the tools for continued education hours.

HH in chat That would be nice to know, because that will open up our minds for who else in our communities we can invite into the SARA realm of education.

Jeanette Gonzalez (JG) Linked Education webpage in chat and spoke to the resources found on the site.

8. Future meeting dates and items for future consideration

AP Spoke to the committee on Climate Action & Adaption Plan goals and bond projects and support to bring in the San Antonio River Authority's expertise and be contracted to potentially review and comment on Green Infrastructure projects. Request for committee to send letter of support for this action to be presented to the Board of Directors.

I propose that the EAC sends a statement to the SARA Trustees stating that the EAC supports City of San Antonio projects proposed for the 2022 Bond funding be scoped to consider the strategies of the CAAP plan and other recognized plans, including the SA Tomorrow Plan, that look at multi benefit projects that address sustainability and resilience, including nature based solutions and green infrastructure to address drainage and water quality. Our SA group will be requesting that the city ask SARA to review the projects to ensure that the sustainability goals have been assessed and considered and if not, present recommendations.

Discussion between the committee including comments below ensued. It was decided to send email to all members for a vote.

HH I do believe CoSA bond projects (all city projects) should be properly reviewed for these issues.

HH I do support

HH I think it's a good idea, and I'm surprised when i learn that infrastructure projects aren't reviewed by experts like SARA.

GS I support

HH Formal text sent around by email would be nice for everyone to get to see it.

James Dodson (JD) I support sending this up for consideration by the full EAC.

HH thank you for that clarification, Steven!

HH Who decides on those bond packages (and whether or not they include asking for review by SARA)? Is it just the City Council?

SS The City staff will be recommending what the Bond Package will include. The River Authority's role would be to review and look for opportunities to expand the city's bond package in cost effective ways. Steven explained examples to the committee.

HH Perhaps if we send this out to the rest of the EAC for an email vote, include some of the information Steven has just given about how SARA has already offered services, and how the process could work if SARA is included (for context, and to induce a more positive vote).

Shaun Donovan (SD) Upon request from Heather, Shaun was appreciative of the EAC for the support and confidence in the River Authority.

JB I am going to have to leave in few minutes. Thanks for a great meeting.

HH And after Board of Trustees approval, make information about this recommendation WIDELY available to the general public who will be voting on the bonds.

HH Far as I know, both are good

AP yes, Heather. Thanks!

DK Discussion regarding next meeting date and request for River Symposium update.

SS Gave update on events of the inaugural River Symposium.

DK Adjourned meeting at 11:25 am